

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 03955 302025Z

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ACTION PM-04

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1237

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EAIR, CU, AO, CA
SUBJ: AIR CANADA DC-8S LEASED TO CUBA

REF: (A) OTTAWA 3651; (B) STATE 220138

1. INGRID HALL (ENERGY, COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORTATION DIVISION, EXTAFF) GAVE TCO SEPTEMBER 29 PREVIEW OF REPLY UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON LIKELY TO MAKE TO AMBASSADOR'S SEPTEMBER 10 REPRESENTATIONS. MAIN POINTS ARE: (1) AIR CANADA HAS EXAMINED LOGS OF EACH OF THE TWO DC-8'S ON A SAMPLE BASIS AND HAS FOUND NO INDICATION THAT EITHER HAVE BEEN USED FOR AFRICAN FLIGHTS. IN ADDITION TO THE MONTREAL-HAVANA SERVICE, UTILIZATION APPEARS CONFINED TO EASTERN EUROPEAN AND CARIBBEAN AREAS. SAMPLE WAS DRAWN ON A RANDOM BASIS AND IS CONSIDERED VALID; COMPLETE EXAMINATION WOULD HAVE REQUIRED VERY EXTENSIVE UTILIZATION OF MONPOWER AND THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE SAMPLE THAT SUGGESTED FULLER CHECK WAS NECESSARY. (2) NEITHER THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT NOR CUBANA HAS MADE ANY SUGGESTION OF ACQUIRING MORE DC-8'S FROM AIR CANADA.

2. IN RECENT CONVERSATION AN AIR CANADA EXECUTIVE REFERRED TO CUBAN SERVICE AND SAID THAT DECISION IN EARLY 1975 TO CONCLUDE THE BILATERAL CAME FROM THE PERSONAL INTERVENTION OF PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU OVER THE OPPOSITION OF AIR CANADA WHICH FELT THE MARKET ONLY WARRANTED CHARTER FLIGHTS. EVENTS
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PAGE 02 OTTAWA 03955 302025Z

HAVE BORNE THIS OUT. CUBANA HAS CUT BACK ITS

FREQUENCIES TO ONE A WEEK FROM MONTREAL AND AIR CANADA WHICH COMMENCED SERVICE FROM TORONTO EARLY IN JULY GAVE UP AT THE END OF THE MONTH. SO FAR AS THIS EXECUTIVE WAS AWARE TRAFFIC ON THE REMAINING CUBANA FLIGHT CONTINUES TO BE LIGHT WITH CUBAN AND CANADIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AS WELL AS THE OCCASIONAL TRAVEL GROUP PROVIDING ITS BULK. CARGO, HE BELIEVED, TO BE MINIMAL AND LARGELY CONFINED TO SUPPLIES FOR THE CANADIAN EMBASSY IN HAVANA. HE ALSO CONFIRMED HALL'S POINT ABOUT NO INQUIRIES FROM CUBA REGARDING ADDITIONAL DC-8'S AND STATED THAT SO FAR AS HE WAS AWARE AIR CANADA HAD NO MORE DC-8'S IT WISHED TO DISPOSE OF.

3. TCO ASKED BOTH HALL AND THE AIR CANADA OFFICIAL WHETHER THEY HAD HEARD ANY COMMENTS FROM EITHER THE CUBAN CIRCUITOUS ROUTING CUBANA HAS TO EMPLOY BETWEEN MONTREAL AND HAVANA. BOTH REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE.

4. HALL SAID THAT OFFICIAL REPLY TO AMBASSADOR'S REPRESENTATION WOULD BE MADE SHORTLY AT "SENIOR LEVEL" AND ADDED THAT THERE WERE ONE OR TWO MINOR POINTS ABOUT WHICH MORE INFORMATION WAS STILL NEEDED. UNLESS INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE, WE PROPOSE ON THAT OCCASION TO RAISE QUESTION WHETHER SAMPLE WAS ADEQUATELY LARGE TO PERMIT CLEARCUT DETERMINATION THAT AIRCRAFT HAVE NOT BEEN USED ON AFRICAN FLIGHTS. ENDERS

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